

# U.S. Plans Arms Control Talks in 2012

January 15, 2012

**The  Moscow Times**

WASHINGTON — U.S. and Russian negotiators will hold talks this year on issues ranging from missile defense to cyber security, hoping to set the stage for a renewed arms control push once elections are over in both countries, the top U.S. arms negotiator said.

Ellen Tauscher, undersecretary of state for arms control, said a year after the New START nuclear arms treaty with Russia that the United States was still committed to returning to the negotiating table to discuss cuts in strategic and tactical nuclear weapons.

But with Europe working on a nuclear deterrence review, elections in Russia and the United States, and Moscow largely satisfied with nuclear stockpile levels following New START, Tauscher said the timing was not right for a new round of nuclear talks.

"We would like to get back to talks. ... But I think we're sanguine about the fact that they're not ready to do it," she told defense writers late last week. "So what we've decided to do is to multitask and to use this next six to eight months to do these ... strategic stability talks."

Tauscher, who would lead the talks with her Russian counterpart, said the two sides agreed in December to focus on 13 topic areas and to meet at least monthly and talk every few days

in an effort to identify common concerns, threats and points of agreement.

The issues include conventional forces in Europe, piracy, cyber security, missile defense and other areas where there is a considerable amount of common interest and agreement but some threat as well. The aim is to define what the two sides mean by strategic stability and what steps they must take to achieve it.

"We're not wasting this year, which is pretty much consumed by ... things that are going to distract people," Tauscher said. "We'll get that work done, and as soon as we get the opening subsequent to their election and perhaps even subsequent to ours, off we go."

Tauscher said New START, ratified last February, had been an important step in improving U.S. and Russian relations, which had soured as a result of U.S. efforts to build a missile defense system in Europe and other disagreements.

Russia has demanded assurances that Tauscher said the United States could not give without limiting or eliminating parts of the system.

"The only way they're going to be reassured that ... the system itself does not undercut their strategic deterrent is to sit with us in the tent in NATO and see what we're doing," she said.

"So is it a political leap of faith? Yes. Are they ready to do it? No," she said. "But we're hoping that these strategic stability talks over the next eight months will start to kind of loosen these old ties that have been binding everybody."

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